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BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

Socialism: A Critical Analysis. By O. D. SKELTON. Hart, Schaffner & Marx Prize Essays, No. 6. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1911. 8vo, pp. ix+329. \$1.50.

This is one of the clearest and most logical presentations of the case against socialism that has yet been made. The author's wide reading, his keen power of analysis and criticism, his brilliant epigrammatic style, and his sense of humor have combined to produce a work of great value and interest. Used in connection with some more historical and expository work, it would make a good textbook for a college class in socialism.

Socialism is hard to define, because it is a living movement, and yet in all its forms four aspects are clearly seen. It presents an indictment of capitalism, an analysis of capitalism, a substitute for capitalism; and it carries on a campaign against capitalism. Two chapters of the book are given to the socialist indictment, one to utopian socialism, three to an examination of Marxian theory, one to a statement of the modern socialistic ideal; and in the last chapter is given a sketch of the modern socialist movement in the leading countries of the world.

The socialist indictment, serious as it is, is not so much an indictment of the present industrial system as it is an indictment of human life itself. The socialist's view of life is curiously one-sided and lacking in perspective. The industrial system is marvelously efficient; the good accomplished far outweighs the incidental evils; and there are forces, such as public opinion, the progress of science, the conflict of organized interests and the activities of the state, which tend to counteract these evils. Moreover the worst abuses are not the product of capitalism, but existed in earlier industrial periods and prevail most in the non-capitalistic countries of the present day. Moral improvement appears to be keeping pace with material improvement, as is seen in the efforts that are being made for social betterment and in the idealism of socialism itself. The discontent of the present day is the result of improvement rather than increasing misery.

While one must agree with all that Professor Skelton says about the improvement of social conditions, one cannot but acknowledge that an explanation of the causes of discontent does not go far toward removing that discontent, which is the real menace to capitalism and which is likely to increase as time goes on. Besides, the improvements that have been attained encourage people to work for better things, and if the mass of the people become convinced that socialism will bring further improvement they will have it, regardless of the good features of the present system. But Professor Skelton considers this objection in a later chapter, in which he shows the impracticability of the socialist ideal.

Professor Skelton rightly claims that the failure of the utopian communities was due to internal rather than to external troubles, and seems to infer that state-wide socialism would fail for the same reasons. And yet he supplies an answer to his own objection when he shows that the Utopians, because of their lack of historical insight, thought that old institutions could be readily abolished and new institutions established, according to specifications worked out in a philosopher's study. The Utopians,

therefore, with their pre-Darwinian conceptions, made proposals and tried experiments before the time was ripe, and it is quite conceivable that similar experiments, both small and large, may be successful at a later stage in industrial evolution.

Professor Skelton is at his best in his analysis and criticism of Marxian theory. He is himself an expert dialectician, and it is a pleasure to see the facility with which he spits fallacy after fallacy with one prong or two of his keen spear and holds the wriggling victim up to the ridicule of all beholders. The process seems so easy that one is almost inclined to suspect that it is not the agile Marxian trout that has been so easily caught, but some inert gudgeon or stupid carp of a totally different breed and origin. And yet it seems evident that Marxian socialism is full of fallacies and it is a wonder that so many intelligent people have been so long deceived by its appearance of profound truth and lucid demonstration.

In his discussion of the materialistic interpretation of history Professor Skelton shows that the theory is susceptible of two distinct interpretations. In the more general sense, economic conditions are regarded as of primary importance in determining occupations, habits of thought, political, religious, moral, and artistic ideas, and, in general, the course of human history. In this sense there can be little objection to the theory, except on the ground of its being monistic and, therefore, one-sided. In the distinctively Marxian sense, the economic interpretation involves the finding of conflicting class interests, a consequent class struggle, and a resultant compromise, a new condition which forms the starting-point for a new opposition. It is the effort of a mind trained in the Hegelian dialectic to fit the facts of history to the dialectical formula. In this sense the materialistic conception fails as an interpretation of history as a whole, although it may be most illuminating when applied to particular periods. "Just as the economic field is not as wide as human life, so within this field class struggle is not the sole form in which the influence of economic conditions is exerted."

Professor Skelton's summary of this discussion is worth quoting. "Economic factors are not the sole or ultimate forces in human progress; where economic forces are operative, they do not necessarily imply a conflict of interest; so far as conflict of interest does determine action, it is a conflict not solely between the interests of two clear-cut and irreconcilably opposed classes, but between countless Protean groups, with the lines of conflict in one relation cutting athwart the lines of another, and making the opponents of yesterday the allies of today; so far, finally, as class struggle is held to be a condition of progress, it can cease only at peril of stagnation."

In his chapter on value and surplus value, Professor Skelton assumes that the labor-cost theory is now utterly discredited, and shows, in opposition to defenders of Marx, that Marx did regard the theory as an explanation of actual exchange values. Engels says that the theory held good in the pre-capitalistic era; Unterman believes that it will prove true in the socialistic system of the future; Sombart calls it merely a "regulative principle"; Kautsky declares that it has nothing to do with socialism; and Veblen claims that it is simply a deduction from Hegelian postulates, and must be translated into terms of the "unfolding life of man in society." But Marx, although he frequently made inconsistent and even contradictory statements, explicitly maintained that values in the long run are proportional to labor cost. He says: "I assume that commodities are sold at their value." Moreover, the theory of surplus value stands or falls with the labor-cost theory. The antagonism between capitalists and laborers is due to exploitation; the proof of exploitation is found in the labor-cost

theory of value; and the assumption at basis of this theory is the assumption that the labor factor in production has the power, and the sole power, to create value. The fact that this assumption is erroneous does not alter the fact that it was made by Marx, and the qualifications of the third volume of *Capital* only serve to show that Marx knew that his theory did not square with the facts. Professor Skelton says: "It must not be lost sight of that the Marxian theory of capitalist development is based, not on the amended and innocuous theory of value reached in the third volume, but on the crass labor-value theory of the first volume. If the esoteric interpretation of Marx is correct, the whole popular propaganda of Marxism is built on a sham, and the millions of workingmen who have been told by press and pamphlet and platform orator that here was the scientifically discovered key to all their ills have been fed on an empty scholastic exercise, a many-paged disquisition on 'the balance between goods . . . in point of the metaphysical reality of the life process.'"

The third stage in the Marxian analysis of capital is the so-called law of capitalist development, which some think can be established independently of the theories of value and surplus value. Here also is clearly seen the Marxian habit of interpreting all processes in terms of the Hegelian dialectic. In the growth of capitalism are developed oppositions which will inevitably bring about the destruction of capitalism. The disproportionate increase of constant as compared with variable capital throws out of employment an ever-increasing army of the unemployed, and this industrial reserve army, so useful to the capitalist, threatens to destroy the system which gave it birth. Accumulation of capital results in increasing misery, and with this grows the revolt of the working class which will culminate in revolution and the expropriation of the capitalists. Capitalism involves production on a larger and larger scale; the small producer is eliminated; presently only two classes will be left, a few enormously rich exploiters, and a vast proletariat sunk in hopeless misery, who will yet rise in their might and sweep the oppressors from the earth. But the greatest antinomy of all is developed between the processes of production and distribution. Production has been socialized, while distribution is still individual in its character; on the one hand there is overproduction, on the other underconsumption; the result is a succession of crises of increasing violence, which will culminate in a terrible world-crisis involving the destruction of capitalism and the establishment of collectivism, the final synthesis, the end of the class struggle, the reign of perpetual peace.

The mere statement of the various phases of the theory of capitalist development is their own refutation. They do not conform to modern economic theory and the evidence of statistics is strong against them. They are easy marks for the shafts of the enemy and are wounded in the house of their friends. Revisionism is a symptom of the decay of Marxian theory and comprehensive theory has arisen to take its place. Professor Skelton says: "The conclusive evidence of the futility of a doctrine is its abandonment or reinterpretation by its quondam upholders under stress of contact with reality. . . . The tendency is to hark back to the idealism of the Utopians . . . and deduce the collectivist commonwealth from the needs of human personality. The materialistic conception of history is qualified into colorlessness, the class struggle more and more retired into the background. The value and surplus value theories are abandoned or their importance minimized, the doctrine of increasing misery repudiated, the inevitable march of the concentration and centralization confronted by unconforming fact. Slowly but surely the Marxian theory is disintegrating."

The logic of Professor Skelton appears sound and his conclusions irresistible, and yet the growing discontent of the present day, which is not the product of any theory, cannot be removed by any merely theoretical criticism, however conclusive. Socialistic theory is a by-product of the industrial system, and when one theory is overthrown a score of others will arise to take its place. In the fable, when all the arguments of the wolf were answered he still determined to eat the lamb, because he was hungry. Admitting the falsity of the Marxian theories, it still remains to convince the working class that hope for better things lies in the prospect of a gradual improvement of capitalism rather than in the expectation of revolutionary and impracticable collectivism. If this cannot be done, it may be that the social revolution will take place and the prophecies of Marx be fulfilled, though all his theoretical basis crumble and fall to the ground.

Professor Skelton's criticism of the modern socialist ideal is pertinent and interesting, and his sketch of the modern socialist movement is very satisfactory. The bibliography is the best that has yet been published. Altogether, the book is an important contribution to anti-socialist literature.

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Labor Laws and Their Enforcement, with Special Reference to Massachusetts.

By CHARLES E. PERSONS, MABEL PARTON, MABELLE MOSES, and three "Fellows," Edited by SUSAN M. KINGSBURY, Ph.D. New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1911. 8vo, pp. xxii+419. \$2.00 net.

This volume is the second of a series of studies in economic relations of women planned by the Department of Research of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union of Boston, and financed by the Fellowship Foundation of the Massachusetts State Federation of Women's Clubs 1905-9. The six studies which make up the volume present an interesting variety in point of attack. The first chapter, "Early History of Factory Legislation in Massachusetts, 1825-74," by Charles E. Persons, and the fifth chapter, "Labor Laws in Massachusetts, 1902-10," a digest by Edith Reeves, supplement in very interesting ways the history of factory legislation in Massachusetts,¹ published by Sarah S. Whittelsey in 1901. Chap. iii is a criticism of the Massachusetts Child-Labor Law, pointing out where the child wage-earners had prior to 1910 in Massachusetts failed to receive not only adequate protection but that measure of protection which had been given to the working children of New York and of Illinois. Changes and amendments intended to strengthen the law and render it more effective are indicated. Such subsidiary governmental processes as the school census, the better registration of births, more rigorous inspection and registration of immigrant children are discussed, as well as substantial change in the law, and a presentation of the Massachusetts method of handling the street-trading children is included. The writer of this chapter is, however, mainly interested and, soundly so, in the efficient application of laws already enacted rather than in the amendment of laws left inadequately enforced or altogether unenforced.

In chap. iv, "The Standing of Massachusetts in the Administration of Labor Legislation," the Massachusetts methods of enforcement as compared with those in use in other states are described, and the relative merit of the various methods is

¹ *Massachusetts Labor Legislation, an Historical and Critical Study*, by Sarah S. Whittelsey.